

Testimony by
Jimmy Jean-Louis
Actor and Goodwill Ambassador
Pan American Development Foundation (PADF)
before
The Committee on Foreign Affairs
Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere
Hearing on:
The Crisis in Haiti: Are We Moving Fast Enough?
Thursday, July 29, 2010

On behalf of the Pan American Development Foundation, I thank Chairman Eliot Engel, Ranking Member Ileana Ros-Lehtinen and other distinguished members of the Subcommittee for the opportunity to testify on Haiti in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake of January 12.

Today, I am appearing before this Subcommittee as the Pan American Development Foundation's Goodwill Ambassador and as the President of my own non-profit organization called Hollywood Unites for Haiti. Equally important, I am speaking today as a Haitian who was on the ground days after the deadly quake and have remained committed to the relief and recovery of the island. The smell of burning flesh, the cries of the survivors and the desperation of the people in the capital city will stay with me for the rest of my life.

As a Haitian, I want to say thank you to the people of the United States for coming to Haiti's assistance after the deadly earthquake. From the private sector to the government and from individual donors to the countless volunteers who worked here and on the island, I say we are fortunate to have a neighbor that is willing to help out the most disadvantaged during a crisis. Haitians will remember the generous support, acts of kindness and prayers on their behalf.

About PADF, the OAS & HUFH

PADF has worked in Haiti for nearly 30 years. The Foundation has been involved in projects that generate employment, promote community-driven development, improve rural and

urban livelihoods, protect human rights and reduce conflicts along the border. It also responds to natural disasters and humanitarian crises. PADF has worked with the Haitian people, civil society, the private sector and the government to implement sustainable projects from the capital of Port-au-Prince to the Haiti-Dominican Republic border. Haiti is one of PADF's highest priorities. To learn more, please visit our special website: www.ImUnitedforHaiti.org

PADF is an affiliate of the Organization of American States established in 1962 to encourage involvement of the private sector in development programs and disaster assistance. In 2009 we helped more than 5.6 million people in 18 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Organization of American States (OAS) is the world's oldest regional organization and today is comprised of 34 countries from Latin America and the Caribbean. It is headquartered in Washington, D.C. www.oas.org

Hollywood Unites for Haiti is a non-profit charitable aid organization based in Los Angeles. It works to provide education, sports and cultural opportunities for Haiti's most disadvantaged children. www.hufh.org.

Today's Hearing

The title of today's hearing – ***"The Crisis Haiti: Are We Moving Fast Enough?"*** – is appropriately timed since we just passed the six-month anniversary of the Western Hemisphere's worst natural disaster. The short answer is "no," we are not. Too many Haitians continue to live in despicable conditions with little hope of moving into the recovery phase in the foreseeable future.

This is not a criticism of any particular person, government or non-governmental organization. To the defense of all of us working to help the island, six months is a very short time period to address the massive destruction of nearly every aspect of Haitian society.

Even before the January 12 earthquake, Haiti was the region's poorest country that faced a myriad of structural problems. When the shaking of the 7.0 quake stopped, those problems were exacerbated. The average Haitian never expected a major earthquake. They worried about hurricanes, floods, food shortages and humanitarian crises. This is a new game for Haitians.

January 12 to July 12: What Worked

Nevertheless, it is important to point out what did work well during the past six months. This is a result of international kindness, the quick response and experience of a large number of well-qualified NGOs, the support of governments and the ingenuity and the united spirit of the Haitian people. Although the list of people, projects and activities is very long, the following are a few examples of what worked well from January 12 to July 12.

U.S. Support

President Obama's immediate pledge of U.S. assistance proved critical to opening a lifeline to Haiti. The Defense Department was highly visible and effective. On the civilian side, the U.S. Agency for International Development has worked tirelessly to direct aid and provide financial resources. While there is always room for improvement, the U.S. arrived quickly and provided significant life-saving resources.

International Private Sector

The international private sector and other donors quickly connected with NGOs like PADF to provide both cash and in-kind support. For our part, we could not have been successful without the support of Chevron, Royal Caribbean Cruises, Caterpillar, Federal Express and countless others. The Organization of American States, Missionary Flights International, United Way and other non-governmental groups were very forthcoming and supportive of our efforts.

Media

It took a massive earthquake to put Haiti's long suffering in front of the world. The international media arrived in force and provided non-stop coverage for weeks of the events as they unfolded. While some reporters remained on the island, many of the news organizations that departed did return at the six-month anniversary to continue their coverage.

Their presence made a difference for Haitians and the non-governmental organizations seeking to support them. The challenge is for NGOs and reconstruction authorities to sustain the media's interest.

NGOs & Programs

NGOs played a huge role in saving the day. Before the quake, they were often criticized for playing too big of a role in Haiti and having their own parochial interests. If it were not for their dedication, however, the number of Haitians who would have died or suffered needlessly would have been far greater.

Since then, NGOs like PADF have rolled out projects that have made a difference for tens of thousands of Haitians. I would like to highlight several activities that are working and may be duplicated:

1. Cash for Work/Livelihoods

Tens of thousands of Haitians have found temporary employment cleaning streets, clearing drainage canals and removing rubble. These cash-for-work programs achieve two important goals. First, they put money directly into residents' pockets and enable them to care for their families. This supports local commerce by allowing them to purchase goods and services instead of relying on handouts. Second, it is a major step in reviving devastated neighborhoods.

For example, in the Port-au-Prince area called Delmas 32, hundreds of residents moved tons of debris from selected areas. After their back-breaking efforts, little shops opened and some resemblance of life had returned to the once rubble-clogged streets and alleys. Delmas 32 has a long way to go before it can return to a pre-earthquake condition, but this was a big step.

PADF and a number of NGOs are managing cash-for-work programs that should be supported and expanded. Eventually, they should transition into longer-term, sustainable jobs.

2. Housing Assessments

A significant number of unoccupied homes may be usable – but Haitians refuse to enter them because they are unsure if they are safe. This project reduces those fears by assessing which buildings can be accessed.

Working in close collaboration with the Haitian government and funded by USAID, PADF's 100 specially trained structural engineers have "tagged" more than 53,000

buildings and placed them into three categories: A “green” tag means a structure is safe based on pre-earthquake standards; a “yellow” tag indicates it is useable but requires some repair and indicates what needs to be fixed; and a “red” tag states the building must be repaired or demolished before it is unsafe for habitation.

The tagging program is a critical step in moving Haitians from the deplorable conditions of the displacement camps to homes that are deemed accessible and safe.

Equally important, the Haitian government is creating a database of the tagged homes and their needed repairs. This will provide a good picture of the urban conditions in Port-au-Prince, which is an unparalleled tool for the government and all who are involved in reconstruction planning.

3. Human Rights

For years, Haiti has faced serious problems with trafficking in persons, forced labor, exploitation of children and violence against women. Three years ago and with funding from USAID, PADF launched a Protecting Human Rights program to focus on these grave problems by training grassroots organizations, supporting shelters, managing awareness campaigns and strengthening government capabilities, among other activities.

Nonetheless, the January 12 earthquake caused these problems to explode. The number of abandoned and unaccompanied children flowing into orphanages or wandering in displacement camps swelled. Rapes, violence and other crimes against the most vulnerable skyrocketed. Government ministries tasked with protecting women and children collapsed.

After the quake, a number of highly qualified international and local NGOs including PADF, the International Rescue Committee, Catholic Relief Services, World Vision, Save the Children and many others stepped in to help. Safe areas were established for children, medical services were provided, support to government agencies increased and other activities. Settlement monitoring was set up to limit the number of acts of aggression against women and children, as well as to educate the displaced population on these issues. PADF, along with the Haitian government, even launched an anti-rape campaign in the displacement camps.

Although very far from sufficient to meet the current demands, these programs have gone a long way toward addressing the critical human rights problems.

4. Community-Driven Development

A successful World Bank and government of Haiti program inverts the traditional development model which has resulted in sustainable difference for impoverished Haitians. Rather than depending on development plans set by well meaning but distant professionals, this six-year-old program teaches communities to prioritize, select and monitor economic development initiatives that directly affect their quality of life. The communities receive a grant to carry out the projects. Today, PADF is working with 360 community groups in 14 districts with an active portfolio of more than 700 projects.

After the quake, this Community Driven Development program kicked into high gear as a way to assist more Haitians. Many of the urban CDD projects focused on the emergency response: rubble removal in affected areas, repair of water kiosks and access to potable water for the community, amongst others.

January 12 to July 12: What Did Not Work

Like the activities that did work (and continue to have a positive impact), there is an equally long list of failed projects, poor decisions and unintended consequences that must be highlighted.

Camps/ IDP Settlements

The word “camp” is misleading. More than 1.2 million people are living in deplorable conditions in temporary displacement camps, which sprung up organically as Haitians sought refuge from their crumbling buildings. Nearly all are impromptu settlements. There are a limited number of formal IDP settlements.

The shelter situation is deplorable. Fewer than 100,000 tents were distributed. More emphasis has been placed on tarps as a solution because they are less expensive and more flexible than tents. About 650,000 tarps have been passed out. It rains almost every night and the poor survivors are drenched. Like many other NGOs, PADF receives regular requests for tents

and tarps but have none to giveaway. Haitians in need don't know where to go for donated tents, tarps or plastic.

Finally, displacement camps are dangerous, overcrowded, lack sanitation and are well on their way to becoming permanent settlements.

By any measure, the collective response to this situation has been a failure.

Security

Port-au-Prince has become a dangerous city. The collapse of the prison, escape of hardened criminals and the rise of new lawbreakers have unleashed a crime wave on top of all the other quake-related problems. Regrettably, NGOs have no special protection from these gangs and individuals. This severely restricts all organizations from carrying out their critical missions – ranging from transporting relief supplies to working in the displacement camps. NGOs often do not have the resources to hire private security firms.

The UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti, known as MINUSTAH, has 8,304 troops and 2,261 police officers. They are dedicated and performing an important role in providing security and training the Haitian police. Both MINUSTAH and the Haitian National Police lost senior personnel to the quake, which further complicates their ability to protect residents.

Unfortunately, they are too few people with too large of a mission to sufficiently protect Haitians and the people who are trying to support them.

Coordination & Cooperation

Early in the relief efforts, the system of cluster groups provided vital information and coordination among NGOs, the UN, governments and Haitian authorities. They were organized around key activities – such as shelter, education and health – and allowed everyone to have a snapshot of what was going on.

After six months, the coordination and cooperation are no longer what they used to be. This is partly the result of competition among NGOs, which are eyeing the limited resources for very complex problems. Besides money, this lack of cooperation is not the fault of a particular system, like clusters, or an individual NGO. Coordination is as much a mindset and attitude as an organization structure. We all need to set align our institutional objectives and reach out to all stakeholders, break down barriers and focus on the outcome for Haitians.

From Crisis Relief to Recovery

Moving Haiti from crisis relief to recovery is much more complicated in Haiti than more developed countries. Prior to the earthquake, Haiti's physical infrastructure was weak at best. The country was classified as food insecure. Economic opportunities in rural areas were minimal, which caused migration to the larger cities. Misery often followed these migrants. Unemployment and illiteracy were high. Finally, the country was still reeling from the four back-to-back hurricanes and tropical storms in late 2008.

This is the canvas that we are working with in Haiti.

As an implementing NGO with nearly 30 years of experience in Haiti, PADF believes the following are key areas that must be taken into consideration as we move from relief to recovery:

1. Strengthening GOH

The quake toppled government buildings and buried workers. It occurred when government offices were open, which resulted in the tragic loss of as many as 18,000 of its employees, many mid level technical specialists and managers. Prior to the quake, Haiti was slowly building its technical capacity after decades of nepotism, political favoritism and basic neglect.

In order to rebuild Haiti, government institutions and its personnel must be on a parallel and accelerated path of redevelopment. PADF's interaction and work with technical personnel in selected ministries finds them to be very capable but in need of support. Indeed, many are still operating under tarps and without basic technology such as computers, let alone supplemental professional training.

While the federal government is often the first recipient of support, the U.S. and NGOs must also place emphasis on local governments. Studies have demonstrated that these local institutions play a far more important role than imagined and must be supported.

When relevant, donors like USAID should require on-the-ground implementers to include a component that strengthens the government of Haiti.

2. Community & Civil Society Involvement

The most successful initiatives are the ones that involve the community and civil society. Good intentions without neighborhood-level input, approval and participation will have limited success. Organizations that understand and use this model will see a higher return on the investment. This is not only the case in Haiti but elsewhere in the Western Hemisphere.

When relevant, USAID should require implementing partners to include local partners into their work plans.

3. Human Rights

As I mentioned earlier, the human rights abuses and violence against women and children has surpassed the crisis point. They are a direct result of insecurity, unacceptable living conditions and, unfortunately, cultural attitudes. Prior to the earthquake, PADF released a major survey that found more than 225,000 children (most young girls) worked as forced laborers called “*restaveks*” in households in major Haitian cities. Although unacceptable by any standard, the use of *restaveks* was very widely accepted.

PADF’s concern is that there is far too little money in the supplemental appropriations bill to adequately deal with the human rights and victims of violence in Haiti. Plus, PADF fears that what little money is available will be shifted to support other projects. Building roads and bridges are critical to Haiti’s future – but they should not be at the expense of young boys and girls who are the victims of what is considered a form of modern-day slavery.

4. Repair & Reconstruction

The house accessibility evaluation program – better known as “tagging” – will help to move tens of thousands of Haitians from the deplorable conditions of the displacement camps to homes that are safe. The natural extension of this is determining the type of repairs possible in the yellow and red tagged single family, multi-family homes and business.

The U.S. government and multinational partners also need to allocate additional resources to repairing homes. Initial cost estimates imposed by funding agencies were too low – approximately \$250 – to adequately fix up these critical structures.

5. Haitian Diaspora

The Haitian Diaspora has a legacy of helping the island. Indeed, remittances have supported individual families, built small businesses and served as a safety net for millions who hover between subsistence and starvation. Today, many members of the Haitian Diaspora are successful professionals who want to give back to their communities.

Since January 12, there have been numerous, well-meaning gatherings with Diaspora organizations to rally their support and coordinate their efforts. NGOs and governmental authorities should incorporate the Haitian Diaspora into their plans. Everyone will greatly benefit from this.

6. Small & Micro Enterprises

As this Subcommittee knows, small and medium-sized businesses are the engines of job creation and innovation in most countries. Prior to the January 12th earthquake, small and micro-enterprises accounted for as much as 90 percent of Haitian employment and 70 percent 80 percent of the economy.

Nevertheless, this engine of growth has been constrained by decades of political instability and an inability to address numerous policy and institutional weaknesses that have caused arrested development and widespread expansion of the informal sector. Any strategy to reactivate the Haitian economy must be built on a vision of creating a middle class that improves its competitiveness through “the progressive formalization of micro, small and medium enterprises to transform the employment and tax base of the country,” according to the Haitian Private Sector Economic Forum’s (PSEF) vision for recovery.

The PSEF stresses that Haiti’s path to rebuilding must include financing for small and medium enterprises as key incubators of growth and employment. Indeed, the Forum cites studies that estimate a need for up to \$2 billion in financing and provides specific recommendations for Haitian reconstruction.

Finally, I direct the Subcommittee’s attention to an IMF Working Paper from 2007 titled “The Growth in the Dominican Republic and Haiti: Why has the Grass Been Greener on One Side of Hispaniola?” by Laura Jaramillo and Cemile Sancak. It shows that in 1960 both countries had the same per capita GDP. During the past 50 years the Dominican Republic’s per capita GDP more than tripled, whereas Haiti’s remained stagnant. The authors of this paper

conclude that despite the similarities of these countries, economic policy decisions are the key determinants explaining their growth divergence.

Conclusion

Chairman Engle and Representative Ros-Lehtinen, I would like to conclude by saying that so many organizations – both governmental and nongovernmental – have done a herculean effort to help Haitians during this unprecedented crisis.

Can we do more? Yes, we can. By focusing on strategic pieces of the problem, we can continue to affect change on the ground. Eventually, we will move from crisis relief to recovery. The challenge for all of us in this hearing, as well as those in the field, is to ensure that we select the right pieces and properly fund them.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify today.